

Imagination Is Power

By Diane Trautman

Albert Einstein famously said, “Imagination is more important than knowledge.” That makes perfect sense to me, especially in the information age when so much data is available at our fingertips, but sorting through it and making it work for us seems more difficult. Knowledge may be considered power, but the real power is in using knowledge to create something new and unique. That requires imagination.

For many adults, our youth was spent playing games, often created out of whatever we could find and with rules we made up. We’d pretend to be Zorro or cowboys, damsels in distress, or brave knights. And we would daydream about the lives we would someday live. Nowadays, our children are often distracted by the Internet, video games, and hundreds of cable channels — not to mention, an array of structured activities — leaving them little time for imaginative play or contemplation.

Students need to use their imaginations to learn how to read. Developing mental images and visualizing sequences of events helps them understand, remember, and tell stories. Asking them to tell a story in their own words allows children to relate it to their own lives, making it more interesting and relevant, which in turn stirs the desire to read more.

This summer, I recommend you turn off the television and pull the kids away from the video games. Make up games. Listen to books on tape (good for travel time) and interrupt the reading to ask for predictions about what will happen next. Or take turns reading to one another and try using different voices for each character. Use found objects to create an art piece for your daughter’s room. Write poetry or songs with your son.

Aside from improving their academic skills, engaging them in activities that require imagination will give your children the opportunity to look at themselves and their futures in a different way. In doing so, you will help them unleash their creativity to make their lives and our world a better place.

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